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ABSTRACT

The hypothesis that the educational and occupational aspirations of students who choose to attend a vocational high school differ from those attending conventional high schools was tested. The educational and occupational aspirations and expectations of 10th grade high school students in a vocational high school were compared with those of 10th grade students in two conventional high schools in Anderson, South Carolina. Administered to all 10th grade students in the three schools on the day of interview in 1972, questionnaire responses were obtained for 236 and 80 white males; 250 and 76 white females; 60 and 4 nonwhite males; and 65 and 14 nonwhite females from the "normal" and vocational schools respectively. Results indicated: (1) the hypothesis was supportable; (2) a lower proportion of students from the vocational school had a preference for professional and technical occupations (with the exception of the nonwhite males, where the small number precluded conclusions); (3) a larger proportion of both white and nonwhite female vocational students aspired to clerical, sales, or service worker jobs; (4) with the exception of nonwhite females, a smaller proportion of the vocational students were interested in higher education; and (5) more of the vocational students were desirous of completing their formal training with vocational or high school. (JC)

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Educational and Occupational Aspirations of Students
in Three High Schools in Anderson, South Carolina, 1973^{1/}

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Background

During the course of participating in Southern Regional Research Project S-81, "Development of Human Resource Potentials of Rural Youth in the South and Their Patterns of Mobility," data have been collected that provide an opportunity to compare the educational and occupational aspirations of students who have elected to attend a vocational high school with other students in the same geographic locality who are attending "regular" high schools.

The locale involved is School District Five of Anderson County South Carolina. This school district is made up of the city of Anderson and its immediate environs. In two of the three high schools in the district (Hanna and Westside) students follow traditional general and college preparatory curricula while the students in the third high school (McDuffie) comprise a select group in that they choose to attend McDuffie because of its vocational program.

Student Selection Process

Students are assigned to attend either Hanna or Westside according to their place of residence with Hanna being located in the northeast side of the district and Westside on the southwest side. Students from any part of the district may elect to attend McDuffie.

The process by which students are selected to attend McDuffie is as follows:

1. During the school year, guidance counselors from McDuffie present to all ninth grade students in the School District a slide program explaining the twelve vocational programs offered at McDuffie.
2. In the second step, all ninth graders in the district attend an orientation session at McDuffie High. This session includes a description of the programs at McDuffie and a tour with student guides during which the ninth graders see physical facilities and students in action in the twelve vocational programs conducted at McDuffie.

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3. After this orientation session, interested students make application to attend McDuffie the following year. In this application, the students indicate their first and second choice of vocational program at McDuffie. They also provide information about first semester (ninth grade) grades, attendance records, and achievement and aptitude test scores.

4. Counselors from McDuffie conduct personal interviews at the junior high schools with each of the applicants.

5. The Selection Committee at McDuffie considers all applicants. Applicants are accepted within the physical limitations of the facilities. For the past several years, the number of applicants has exceeded the facilities. Rejections have been based primarily on failing grades and poor attendance records of the applicants.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to compare the educational and occupational aspirations and expectations of tenth grade students in a vocational high school with those of tenth grade students in "normal" high schools in the same geographic area.

Source of Data

As stated above, the data were collected during the school year of 1972 as a part of Southern Regional Research Project S-81. More detailed information on South Carolina's participation in this project is included in a previous report ^{3/}. All tenth-graders present on the day of the interview in the three schools are included in the report. No attempt was made to secure data from students absent on the day of the interview. The distribution of the students interviewed in the schools by color and sex is shown in Table 1.

Occupational Aspirations

The open-ended question used to determine occupational aspirations was stated as follows: "If you were completely free to choose any job, what would you desire most as your lifetime job?" Respondents were requested to list specific jobs rather than to give general answers such as "work at the mill". Jobs listed were coded into an adaptation of the Bureau of Census classification. Jobs such as professional athletes and entertainers were classified as "glamour" and aspirations for jobs in the armed services were listed as "military". The distribution of occupational aspirations of the students by

^{3/} Boyd, Virlyn A., "Aspirations, Expectations, and Attitudes of South Carolina High School Students," AE 335, Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, South Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station, Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina, September 1970.

Table 1. Distribution of Tenth-Grade Students in the Three High Schools in Anderson County, South Carolina, by Color and Sex, 1973.

	All Schools		Hanna & Westside		McDuffie	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All students						
Total	785	100.0	611	77.8	174	22.2
Male	380	100.0	296	77.9	84	22.1
Female	405	100.0	315	77.8	90	22.2
White students						
Total	642	100.0	486	75.7	156	24.3
Male	316	100.0	236	74.7	80	25.3
Female	326	100.0	250	76.7	76	23.3
Nonwhite students						
Total	143	100.0	125	87.4	18	12.6
Male	64	100.0	60	93.8	4	6.2
Female	79	100.0	65	82.3	14	17.7

color is included in Table 2. Not surprisingly, a higher proportion of the white males at Hanna and Westside than at McDuffie aspired to jobs classified as professional and technical. Conversely, jobs classified as craftsmen and operatives were chosen by a disproportionate number of the white males at McDuffie. The small number of black males choosing to go to Westside precluded comparing of occupational aspirations of nonwhite males by choice of school.

The major disparities in the occupational aspirations of the female students were that a higher proportion of female tenth-graders at Hanna and Westside chose occupations classified as professional and glamour. The McDuffie girls disproportionately chose jobs in the categories of clerical and sales and service workers.

Occupational Expectations

As a part of the research in the S-81 project, an attempt has been made to distinguish between aspirations and expectations. The responses to the question concerning what jobs the students actually expected to have when they became adults are summarized in Table 3. Examination of the data on occupational aspirations (Table 2) and occupational expectations (Table 3) indicate that the latter are more realistic. For example the proportion expecting "glamour" occupations is lower than those aspiring to these occupations. Similarly, a much higher proportion of all sex and color groups expect jobs in the classification of clerical and sales and operatives than aspire to jobs in those categories.

Table 2. Occupational Aspirations of Tenth Grade Students in the Three High Schools in Anderson, South Carolina, by Color and Sex, 1973.

Occupational Aspirations	Students by Sex, Color, and School									
	Males					Females				
	White		Nonwhite			White		Nonwhite		
	Hanna and Westside	McDuffie	Hanna and Westside	McDuffie	Westside	Hanna and Westside	McDuffie	Hanna and Westside	McDuffie	Westside
N=	236	80	60	4	250	76	65	14		
Professional, Technical	55.1	35.0	36.6	50.0	60.0	44.8	46.2	35.7		
Managers	6.8	6.2	5.0	--	2.4	1.3	1.6	--		
Clerical, Sales	1.2	2.5	1.7	--	18.4	21.0	20.0	35.8		
Craftsmen & Foremen	7.2	21.3	8.3	25.0	--	--	--	--		
Operatives	2.1	12.5	8.4	--	0.8	2.6	3.1	--		
Service Workers	2.1	2.5	5.0	--	2.4	26.4	3.0	7.1		
Laborers	--	1.3	--	--	--	--	--	--		
Glamour	13.2	13.7	21.6	--	12.4	2.6	26.1	14.3		
Military	5.1	2.5	1.7	--	--	--	--	--		
No answer	7.2	2.5	11.7	25.0	3.6	1.3	--	7.1		

Table 3. Occupational Expectations of Tenth Grade Students in the Three High Schools in Anderson, South Carolina, by Color and Sex, 1973.

Occupational Expectation	Students by Sex, Color, and School									
	Males					Females				
	White		Nonwhite			White		Nonwhite		
	Hanna and Westside	McDuffie	Hanna and Westside	McDuffie	Nonwhite	Hanna and Westside	McDuffie	Hanna and Westside	McDuffie	Nonwhite
N=	236	80	60	4	4	250	76	65	14	
Professional, Technical	48.2	31.4	25.0	50.0		49.6	20.4	32.2	7.2	
Managers	5.5	6.3	3.3	--		0.8	2.5	--	--	
Clerical, Sales	6.8	--	6.7	--		23.6	26.3	29.3	42.8	
Craftsmen & Foremen	9.8	25.0	13.3	25.0		--	--	--	--	
Operatives	5.5	27.6	29.4	25.0		2.0	3.8	12.3	42.8	
Service Workers	1.7	1.1	--	--		12.0	44.5	10.8	--	
Laborers	--	--	--	--		--	--	--	--	
Glamour	3.4	1.1	10.0	--		2.8	--	7.7	--	
Military	4.7	2.5	--	--		0.4	--	--	--	
No answer	14.4	5.0	23.3	--		8.8	2.5	7.7	7.2	

Educational Aspirations

The data on educational aspirations were obtained from the responses to the question: "If you could have as much schooling as you desire, which of the following would you do? (Circle only one number):

1. Quit school right now.
2. Complete high school.
3. Complete a business, commercial, electronics, or some other technical program after finishing high school.
4. Graduate from junior college (2 years).
5. Graduate from a college or university.
6. Complete additional studies after graduating from a college or university."

The students who elected to attend the vocational high school indicated lower educational aspirations than did those students enrolled in the other two high schools. These data are presented in Table 4. For all color and sex groups, a larger proportion of the McDuffie students did not express a desire for any education beyond high school. Conversely, except for black females, a higher proportion of students at Hanna and Westside than at McDuffie indicated a desire to go to graduate school. In general, the expressed educational aspirations of these students are congruent with their choice of a vocational high school.

Educational Expectations

In addition to educational aspirations, respondents were requested to indicate the level of education they expected to achieve. Answers to this question summarized in Table 5 are in the same general pattern as those for educational aspirations in the previous table. Educational expectations are somewhat lower than aspirations. A larger proportion of the students at Hanna and Westside aspire to and expect to achieve more formal education than do the students at McDuffie.

Conclusions

The data presented in this paper support the hypothesis that the educational and occupational aspirations of students who elect to attend a vocational high school differ from those of students attending conventional high schools. A lower proportion of students in the vocational high school indicated a job preference for the professional and technical occupations. This was true of all color and sex groups except the nonwhite males where the small number precludes drawing any conclusions. Among both white and nonwhite females, a larger proportion of the vocational students expressed an aspiration for jobs classed as clerical and sales and as service workers.

With regard to educational aspirations, with the exception of nonwhite females, a smaller proportion of the vocational students indicated an interest in college and graduate school. Conversely, more of the vocational

Table 4. Educational Aspirations of Tenth Grade Students in the Three High Schools in Anderson, South Carolina, by Color and Sex, 1973.

Level of Education Desired	Students by Sex, Color, and School							
	Males				Females			
	White		Nonwhite		White		Nonwhite	
	Hanna and Westside	McDuffie	Hanna and Westside	McDuffie	Hanna and Westside	McDuffie	Hanna and Westside	McDuffie
N=	236	80	60	4	250	76	65	14
Quit Now	2.5	7.5	3.3	--	2.4	4.0	--	--
High School	15.3	23.8	26.7	50.0	14.0	44.7	29.2	57.2
Vocational School	10.2	35.0	6.7	25.0	11.2	19.7	23.1	7.1
Junior College	3.8	2.5	13.3	--	11.2	10.5	15.4	--
4-yr College	36.9	15.0	40.0	25.0	32.0	17.1	18.5	14.3
Graduate School	30.9	16.2	8.3	--	29.2	4.0	13.8	21.4
No answer	0.4	--	1.7	--	--	--	--	--

Table 5. Educational Expectations of Tenth Grade Students in the Three High Schools in Anderson, South Carolina, By Color and Sex, 1973.

Level of Education Expected	Students by Sex, Color, and School									
	Males					Females				
	White		Nonwhite			White		Nonwhite		
	Hanna and Westside	McDuffie	Hanna and Westside	McDuffie		Hanna and Westside	McDuffie	Hanna and Westside	McDuffie	
N=	236	80	60	4		250	76	65	14	
Quit Now	1.3	2.5	3.3	--		0.8	--	1.5	--	
High School	19.6	40.0	31.7	50.0		20.0	69.7	32.3	71.4	
Vocational School	9.7	37.5	10.0	50.0		12.0	13.2	21.5	7.2	
Junior College	8.9	3.8	10.0	--		16.0	6.6	18.5	--	
4-yr College	41.9	8.7	36.7	--		37.6	9.2	16.9	21.4	
Graduate School	17.8	7.5	5.0	--		13.6	1.3	9.3	--	
No Answer	0.8	--	3.3	--		--	--	--	--	

high school students indicated the desire to end their formal training with high school or vocational school.

These responses are not unexpected but they do indicate that the students choice of a vocational curriculum in high school is congruent with their educational and occupational aspirations.